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## HUTTON LAKE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE Wyoming

Administered by Arapaho NWR  
PO Box 457, Walden, Colorado

### Introduction

Hutton Lake National Wildlife Refuge is in Albany County, southeastern Wyoming, 12 miles southwest of Laramie, 10 air miles north of the Wyoming-Colorado border. Established in 1932 primarily as a resting and breeding ground for migratory birds and to provide haven for other indigenous wildlife, the refuge is a satellite of Arapaho National Wildlife Refuge.

Situated in the southern part of the Laramie Plains, a montane, park-like geographic entity surrounded by mountains, the refuge is at an elevation of 7,150 feet. The area embraces 1,968 acres, consisting of 1,408 acres of upland and 560 acres of open water and marsh. The five small lakes on the refuge (Hutton, Creighton, George, Rush and Hoge) are arranged in a half-moon and were developed from natural sumps by private, and later, wildlife interests.

Sand Creek, spawned in Colorado and seasonal nourisher of refuge lakes, snakes a northward course through a small west portion of the refuge. Meadowlands, lush with a wide variety of semiaquatic plants, are situated to the west and north, while native grass rangelands, interspersed with greasewood dominated alkali flats and draws, lie to the east and south.

### 1987 Activities

Hutton Lake NWR was visited on an irregular basis during the year. Waterfowl censuses were conducted occasionally. The first census on March 26 was conducted while the larger lakes were opening up, the smaller lakes were still ice-covered. At that time there were approximately 3,600 ducks and 190 Canada geese. Four eagles were observed on the same day including two adult balds, one adult golden, and one immature golden. The spring migration was in full swing apparently because, on April 3, Patten counted 7,300 ducks and 1,100 coots. Geese had dropped to 70. By April 21, most of the birds had moved through. Only about 3,000 ducks and 25 geese remained. By the end of May we were left with only 200 ducks and 15 Canada geese, which probably amounted to the breeding population. Waterfowl production, based on brood counts, was estimated at 579 ducks, and 48 Canada

geese. Early migrants began showing up in July when Patten estimated 2,000 molting ducks on Hutton Lake. The final census was conducted on October 7. An estimated 3,850 ducks and 100 geese were present at that time.

On May 28, Patten and Varney accompanied Zone Supervisor Matthews and Staff Specialist Berlinger on an inspection of Hutton Lake NWR. Deteriorated water control facilities and the condition of upland habitat were examined. With HRM in mind, we discussed the possibility of initiating some animal impact on parts of the refuge.

John Eisemann took his YCC crew to Hutton Lake NWR during a couple days in July to re-post the boundary. Many of the signs were old and bullet-ridden, badly in need of replacement.

In July, George Allen from the Billings, MT Ecological Services Office collected five coots from Hutton Lake NWR for a contaminants study. Preliminary results obtained early in 1988 do not indicate a contaminants problem.

In August, Brewer and Eisemann spent a week at Hutton Lake and Bamforth NWR's, conducting much needed repairs to water control facilities and wetlands. Dikes were rehabed, control structures and ditches were cleaned out, and silt infested wetlands were bulldozed with the spoil pushed up for nesting islands. Much remains to be done, including a lot of rip-rapping planned for 1988, but at least we've made a start.

Eisemann and Rizor put up 6 goose nesting structures and filled them with hay in December.

One grazing permittee was allowed 250 AUM's from July 20 through November 1, but the cows were off by August 4. He was charged \$3.00/AUM.

A Special Use Permit was issued to a University of Wyoming student to trap deer mice on the refuge. The student was studying sexual bias in mortality rates due to reproductive stress of females. To date we have not received any results of his study.

Patten and Varney attended a meeting in Laramie on September 10, to discuss the status of the endangered Wyoming toad. A remnant population of the toad is known to exist on private land approximately 6 miles from Hutton Lake NWR. Since toads were historically known to inhabit the refuge, it has been identified as a possible re-introduction site.